



PROCELLARIA MOJIBIS: Gould.

Smithsonian Institution

PROCELLARIA MOLLIS, *Gould.*

Soft-plumaged Petrel.

Procellaria mollis, Gould in Ann. and Mag. of Nat. Hist., vol. xiii. p. 363.

BETWEEN the 20th and 50th degrees of south latitude this species flies in the greatest abundance, but I observed it to be more numerous in the Atlantic than in the Pacific; and it probably, like the other wandering members of this genus, makes a circuit of the globe: although I have not seen it within sight of the shores of Australia, it doubtless occasionally visits them, for I observed it to be plentiful off the eastern end of the islands of St. Paul and Amsterdam. It is a species which will ever live in my memory, from its being the first large Petrel I saw after crossing the line, and from a somewhat curious incident that then occurred. The weather being too boisterous to admit of a boat being lowered, I endeavoured to capture the bird with a hook and line, and the ordinary sea-hooks being too large for the purpose, I was in the act of selecting a hook from my stock of salmon-flies, when a sudden gust of wind blew my hooks, and a piece of parchment ten inches long by six inches wide on which they were lying, overboard into the sea, and I was obliged to give up the attempt for that day; on the next I succeeded in capturing the bird with a hook baited with fat, and the reader may judge of my surprise when on opening the stomach I there found the piece of parchment, so completely uninjured that it was dried and again resorted to its original use.

Its powers of flight are considerable and the action of its wings is very rapid.

The food appears to be precisely the same as that of the other Petrels, and consists of mollusks, the fat of dead cetacea, small fish, &c.

The sexes are precisely similar in colour, but the young differ from the adult in having all the under surface dark grey and the throat speckled with grey.

Crown of the head and all the upper surface slate-grey, the feathers of the forehead margined with white; wings dark brown; before and beneath the eye a mark of brownish black; face, throat and all the under surface pure white, interrupted by the slate-grey of the upper surface advancing upon the sides of the chest and forming a faint band across the breast; centre tail-feathers dark grey; outer feathers greyish white, freckled with dark grey; bill black; tarsi, base of the toes and basal half of the interdigital membrane pale fleshy white, the remainder black.

The figures are of the natural size.